DARK MOON RISING
BATMAN
and the MAD MONK
6
OF 6
MAR
2007
MATT WAGNER
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IN THOSE FINAL MOMENTS...I FELT MY HEAD BEGIN TO CLEAR.
LIKE SOMEONE HAD LIFTED A STICKY VEIL FROM MY MIND.
SUDDENLY I COULD SEE, HEAR, FEEL, AND SMELL THE TRAPPINGS OF MY PREDICAMENT...
...AND I BEGAN TO SCREAM.
AEEEIIIHH!
WHAT HAVE Y---? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?!
LET ME GO, DAMN YOU! LET ME GO!!
MATT WAGNER
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ROB LEIGH
·LETTERS·
BRANDON MONTCLARE
·ASST. EDITOR·
BOB SCHRECK
·EDITOR·
BATMAN CREATED BY
BOB KANE

WHAT DO YOU...DO YOU WANT?!

ONLY YOUR LOVELY LIFE'S BLOOD, MY DEAR. DOWN TO THE LAST DROP...

Alfred was right.

This vehicle can ALSO be used to strike terror.

KR4SH

I've interrupted some twisted sort of cult ritual.

The crimson robes scatter before me.

SKREEEEE..

The room is cavernous.

Still, gas should help thin out the numbers.

WHA--?

NICCOLA!! WHAT *IS* THIS?! SOME...SOME PART OF THE SACRIFICE?!

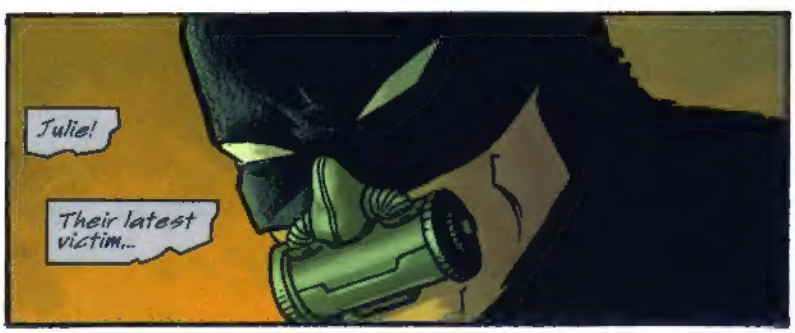
I ASSURE YOU...*NOT!*

THWAK
I don't have far to look...
...to locate the one I seek--their leader.
THE MONK.
BRETHREN!
THIS... INTRUDER IS THE VERY DOWNFALL OF WHICH I HAD WARNED!!
TEAR OUT HIS THROAT AS YOU WOULD ANY CATTLE!
PROVE YOURSELVES WORTHY OF MY GIFTS!
THOK
KOFF-KOFF
CHAK
The members of this "brotherhood" are no warriors. Only a flock of cruel and perverted thrill-seekers.
It's their obscene shepherd I want.

BUT IF...IF YOU DID NOT ARRANGE THIS--?
WHO IS HE?!
YOU SPEND TOO LONG WITH YOUR HEAD BURIED IN DREAMS, DALA.
HE IS... THE "BAT-MAN." A MEDDLER WHO MEANS US NO GOOD--DESPITE THE TENOR OF HIS DISGUISE!

Half of them flee. A few more succumb to the gas.
The remainder offer little resistance.
GHDD

BATMAN!
HELP ME! PLEEEASE--!!
I'M...THEY... KIDNAPPED ME... PLEEEASE--!!


Julie!
Their latest victim...

THUK.
THUK
AEEGHH--!
He's incredibly fast. Nearly avoids BOTH fangs.
Lets his woman take the worst of it.
He's injured.
But doesn't seem especially TROUBLED by the silver.
Again--
N--GHH!
--so fast--
FUD
--barely saw--

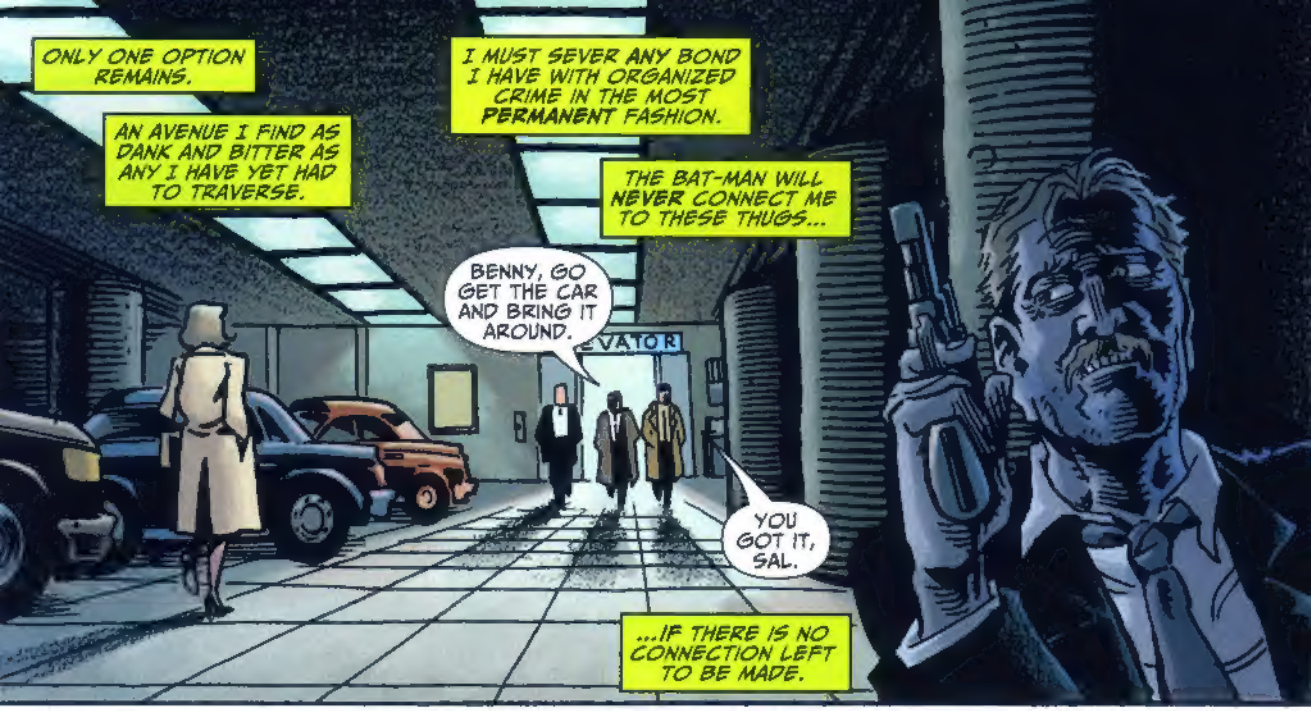
SMASH

Stitches burst...
...shirt slowly filling up with blood...

But he's on the run.

Julie...
...seems okay.

Small fires from the fallen braziers.
Gas all but dissipated.
Have to risk it...

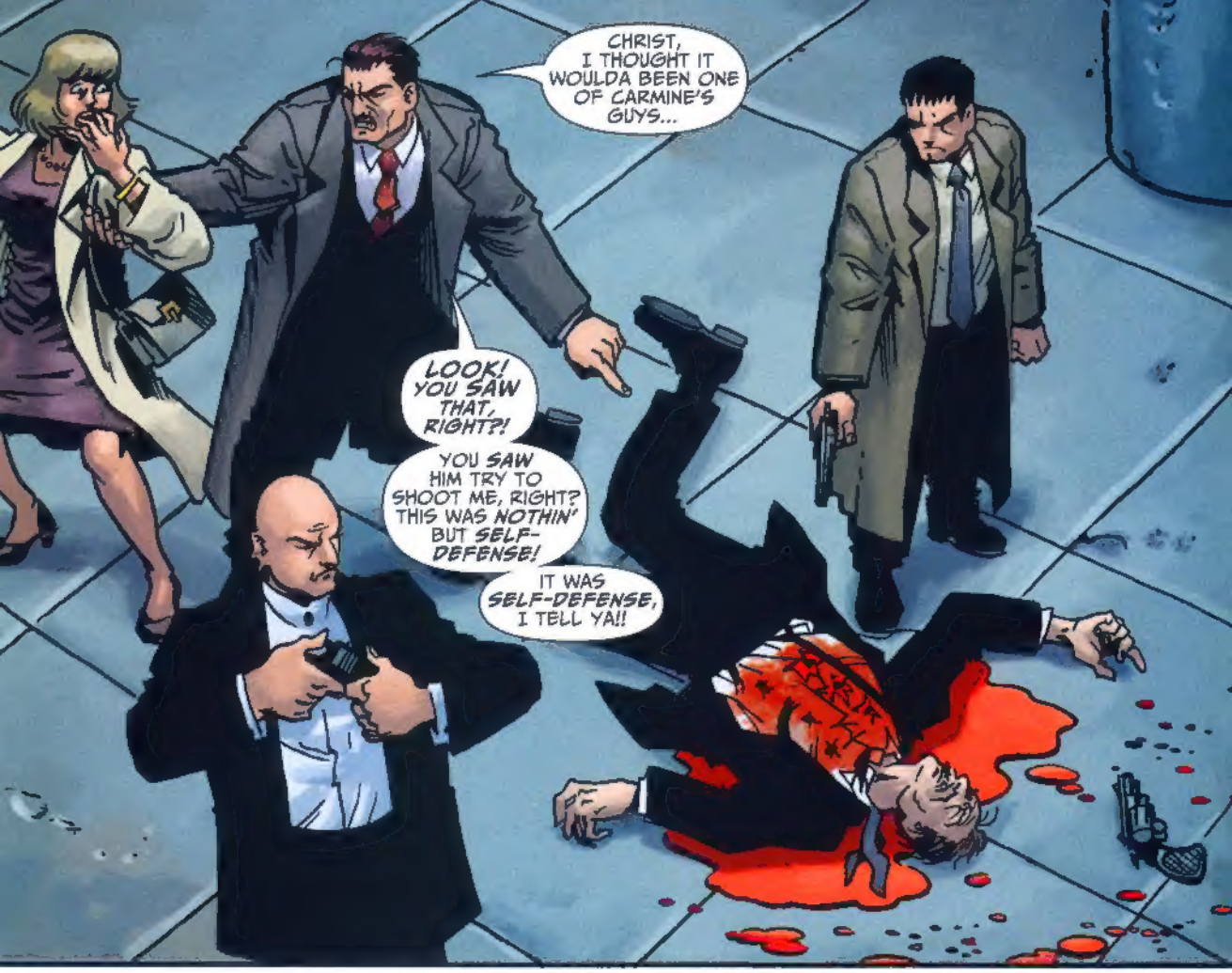

ONLY ONE OPTION REMAINS.
AN AVENUE I FIND AS DANK AND BITTER AS ANY I HAVE YET HAD TO TRAVERSE.
I MUST SEVER ANY BOND I HAVE WITH ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE MOST PERMANENT FASHION.
THE BAT-MAN WILL NEVER CONNECT ME TO THESE THUGS...
BENNY, GO GET THE CAR AND BRING IT AROUND.
YOU GOT IT, SAL.
...IF THERE IS NO CONNECTION LEFT TO BE MADE.

MARONI!
IT'S OVER!
SAY WHATEVER PRAYERS YOU CAN RECALL...

BANG BANG BANG

TOC
TOC
PING
GEEZUS! IS THAT--
MADISON?!

BANG BANG BANG
NO--


CHRIST, I THOUGHT IT WOULDA BEEN ONE OF CARMINE'S GUYS...
LOOK! YOU SAW THAT, RIGHT?!
YOU SAW HIM TRY TO SHOOT ME, RIGHT? THIS WAS NOTHIN' BUT SELF-DEFENSE!
IT WAS SELF-DEFENSE, I TELL YA!!

The castle is vast.
It makes WAYNE MANOR seem slight in comparison.
Bleeding freely now. Smoke filters up from downstairs.
Can't let him escape.

So close...
YOU RESEMBLE THE GRAND INQUISITORS OF OLD...

BASH
...THEY ALSO NEVER KNEW WHEN TO QUIT!!
Despite his wound, he's still lightning fast.
While I am slow and addled from my own blood loss.
YAGGH!
SHAK
Ferociously STRONG as well.
He'll beat through this shield in mere seconds.
KRANG

CHANK
GHHK--
WAM
Dizzy..
...IGNORE IT.
Lucky break, crime-fighter.
Seems he's got no stomach for the rough stuff.
Focus.
Breathe.
Take him down.

End of the line. And he's--

--gone?

The drop is too sheer.

The cliff face, a thousand feet or more.

Only one possibility...

YOU ARE MISGUIDED IN PURSUING ME, "BAT-MAN." YOU ARE MISTAKEN TO THINK YOUR APPEARANCE FRIGHTENS ME

The wind is fierce. The roof tiles, treacherous

Let him talk. Inch closer.

I HAVE KNOWN *CRUSADERS* SUCH AS YOU FOR CENTURIES!

FOOLISHLY TRYING TO PURGE WHAT CAN *NEVER* BE ERADICATED!

DROP THIS CHARADE! I DON'T BUY INTO THIS WHOLE *"VAMPIRE"* ROUTINE!

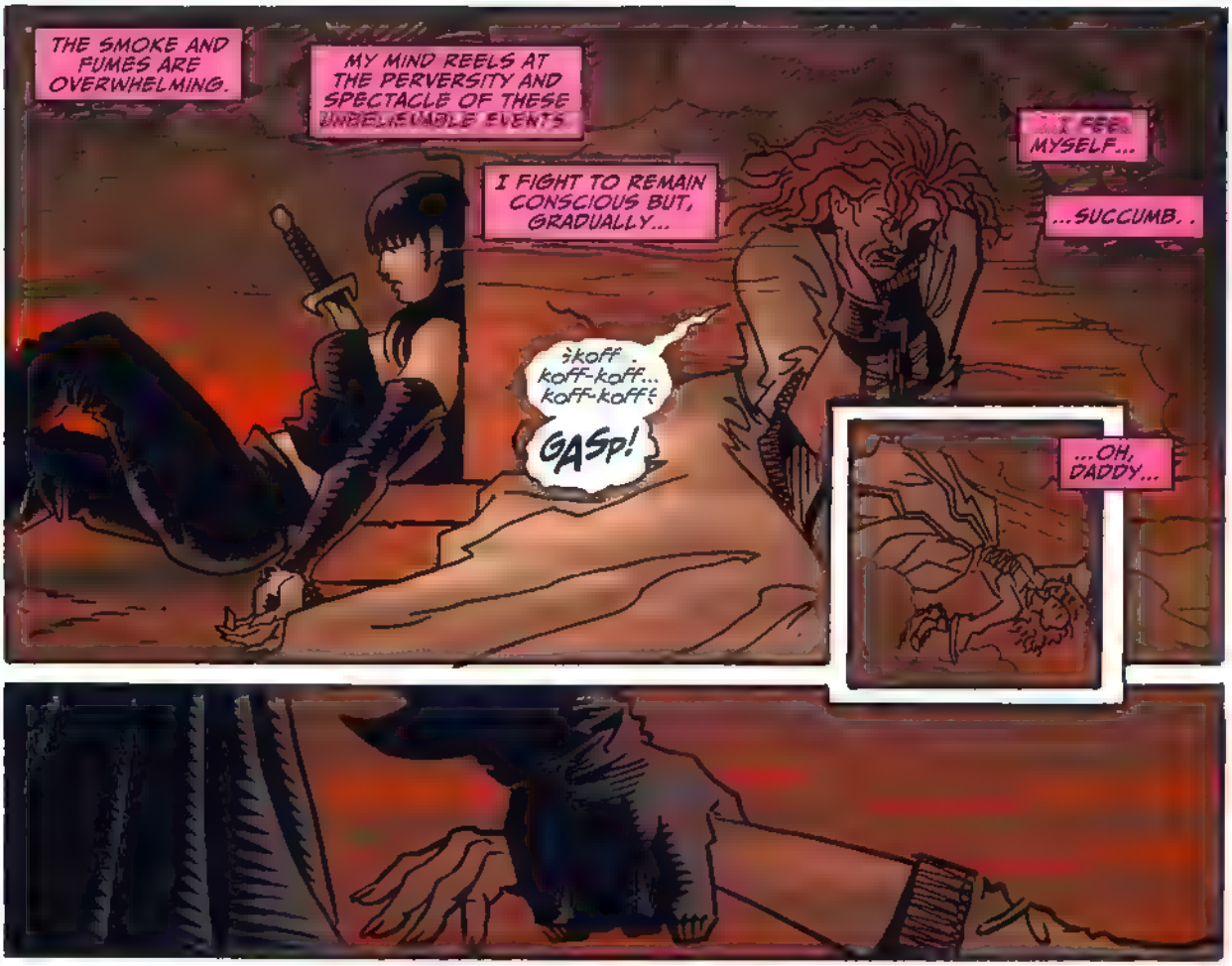
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, RICHARD RALLSTONE!

Ahhh. AND LIKE *ALL* CRUSADERS, YOU UNDERSTAND SO VERY LITTLE.

ALAS, WITH NO TIME LEFT FOR IMPROVEMENT--
KA-KRAK

His glowing arc winks out in the darkened depths below.
Time to take the hint and get off of this rooftop.
I can smell the smoke from beneath me.
Julie.

THE BROTHERHOOD LIES BROKEN.
THE CASTLE, IN FLAMES.
EVEN NICCOLAI... MIGHTY NICCOLAI... MAY STAND DEFEATED.
BUT THERE WILL BE A BLOOD SACRIFICE THIS EVENING!
I WILL GORGE ON THE JUICE OF YOUR VEINS AND THEN, I SHALL LIVE FOREVER!
AAGH!
KRAK
...
SHUK


THE SMOKE AND FUMES ARE OVERWHELMING.
MY MIND REELS AT THE PERVERSITY AND SPECTACLE OF THESE UNBELIEVABLE EVENTS.
I FIGHT TO REMAIN CONSCIOUS BUT, GRADUALLY...
I FEEL MYSELF...
...SUCCUMB..
:koff koff-koff... koff-koff:
GASp!
...OH, DADDY...

Her breathing has stopped.
Heartbeat is faint.
Focus.
And count
...TWO, THREE, FOUR.
C'MON, JULIE... C'MON.
JULIE!
LISTEN TO ME! YOU'VE GOT TO START BREATHING!
JULIE!!
Calm down. She's never heard BATMAN'S voice.
MOST pray they never will.
Needs to be... more familiar.
JULIE...?
JULIE? LISTEN TO MY VOICE... COME ON NOW.
BREATHE IN, JULIE. THE AIR OUT HERE IS SWEET.
AND PURE. JULIE...?
ik-koff.. k-koff!
GASP!
B-B. BRUCE--?

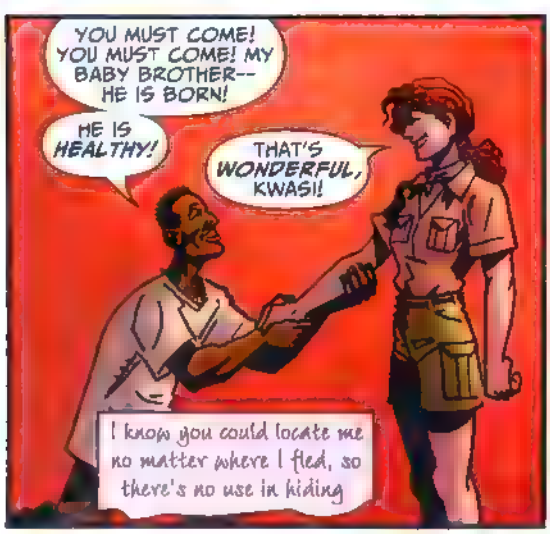
BRUCE?!
YES, JULIE. I'M... I'M HERE.
BUT YOU-YOU'RE... OHMIGOD!
HOW CAN...HOW CAN THIS BE TRUE?!
JULIE, LISTEN TO ME. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
CAN YOU BREATHE CLEARLY?
Her eyes... so frightened. So confused.
The first time I've ever REGRETTED this costume's effect.
YES, I'M... I'M FINE.
BJT, HOW COULD...THIS BE SO? HOW COULD YOU BE BATMAN?! HOW COULD I NOT HAVE KNOWN?!
I KNOW I'M...
...SORRY FOR THAT DECEPTION. IT'S NOT ONLY YOU...
ALL THOSE TIMES... I WONDERED WHERE YOU WERE...ALL THOSE NIGHTS.
AND DADDY WOULD JUST GO ON ABOJT--
OH-MI-GOD!!
...I HOLD THIS IDENTITY SECRET FROM EVERYONE. IT'S...NOT SAFE FOR OTHERS TO KNOW
BRUCE, I...I JUST REMEMBERED!
WHEN I WAS...UNDER THAT MONK'S CONTROL... DADDY TOLD ME...
HE-- HE INTENDED ON DOING SOMETHING DESPERATE! SOMETHING DANGEROUS!! OH, BRUCE--
WHAT IF HE...WHAT IF HE'S--
IT'S OKAY, JULIE. CALM DOWN.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR FATHER HAD PLANNED...
...BUT I SWEAR TO YOU...HE WILL COME TO NO HARM!

FIRST...
...HE WAS ALONE.
THE ONE WHO WALKED IN THE SHADOWS OF THE MOON.
WITH AN ENDLESS CHAIN OF BODIES, TO BOTH POSSESS AND CONSUME.
THEN...
...CAME THE LATEST INCARNATION, A BODY SO YOUNG AND SO PAMPERED.
AND A COMPANION WHOSE ADORATION KNEW NO BOUNDS
NEXT...
...CAME A FOLLOWING, THE COMPANION'S ILK, AND THE MOONWALKER LANGUISHED IN THEIR WORSHIP.
HE WAS PLEASED
THEN...
...CAME THE END OF THOSE DAYS
AND THE CREATURE WHO TORE IT ALL DOWN.
SOMEDAY, HE WILL DESTROY THAT ONE.
NEXT...

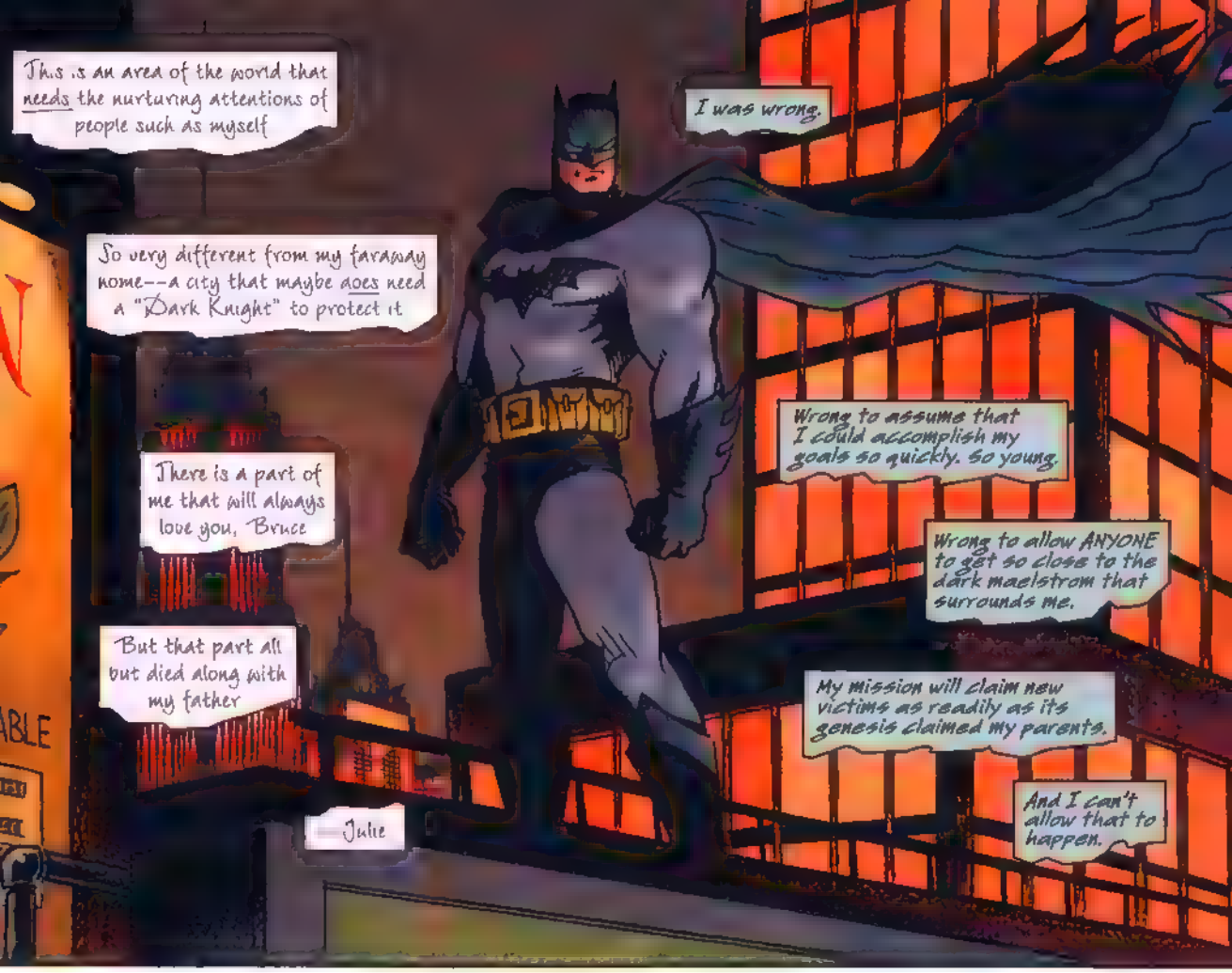
Dearest Bruce,
For safety's sake, there are things I can't and won't express in this letter. Things I'd like to say, but will never give voice
From my father's final journal entries, I now know exactly how he came to the state that consumed him and why he did what he did. It's evident that he was paranoid. And delusional
But the fact reamains that he died from an overwhelming fear that obsessed him

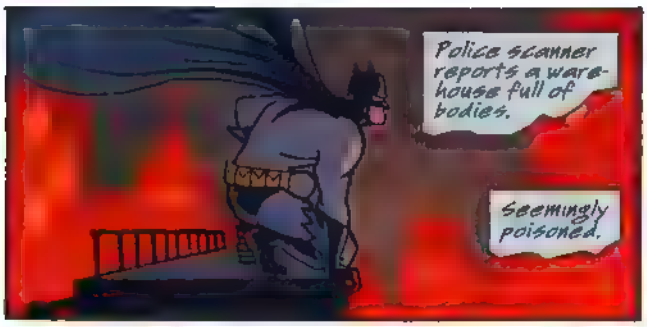
My father died because of Batman
You may never understand or forgive me for leaving both Gotham and you
But this fact will always stand between us, and that is a reality with which I could never live

LADY JULIE! LADY JULIE!


YOU MUST COME! YOU MUST COME! MY BABY BROTHER-- HE IS BORN!
HE IS HEALTHY!
THAT'S WONDERFUL, KWASI!
I know you could locate me no matter where I fled, so there's no use in hiding

I am following my father's wishes that I contribute to the world's well-being
I am in Africa and I find that life in the Peace Corps agrees with me
COME SEE! COME SEE!


This is an area of the world that needs the nurturing attentions of people such as myself
I was wrong.
So very different from my faraway home--a city that maybe does need a "Dark Knight" to protect it
Wrong to assume that I could accomplish my goals so quickly. So young.
There is a part of me that will always love you, Bruce
Wrong to allow ANYONE to get so close to the dark maelstrom that surrounds me.
But that part all but died along with my father
My mission will claim new victims as readily as its genesis claimed my parents.
Julie
And I can't allow that to happen.


Police scanner reports a warehouse full of bodies.
Seemingly poisoned.

All bearing some semblance of a rictus-like grin, even in death.

Gordon's bound to be there.
Perhaps THIS is what became of the missing heroin.

The war continues.
SPECIAL RETURN ENGAGEMENT
TWO WEEKS ONLY!
THE HALY CIRCUS
FEATURING
THE FLYING GRAYSONS
The End

WW3

DC Nation

One Year Later. You all remember it, that defining moment when all the stories of the DC Universe jumped from the events of Infinite Crisis to a time where the lives of our heroes were dramatically changed. Most changes came without explanation as we watched our heroes deal with these ramifications in an attempt to rebuild their lives. But what happened? What caused this seismic change to the status quo? What transformed so many heroes?

For nearly a year we left these questions unanswered, but now their story can be told. We have hinted at it and left hushed clues as we watched the missing year slowly revealed in our mega-hit 52. In 52, we have seen a world that exists without Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, and now with 52 #50, we will see a world at war.

World War Three, the World vs. Black Adam, the metahuman war that swept across the globe. Fast and vicious, it's not surprising that it altered the lives of so many of our heroes.

More devastating than a nuclear holocaust is the unbridled rage of Black Adam as he carves a hellbent path of destruction. His story will be told in 52, but the effects of his wrath are so far reaching that we needed to create a special four-part story to fully show its impact.

WORLD WAR THREE: A CALL TO ARMS; THE VALIANT; HELL IS FOR HEROES and UNITED WE STAND will hit the stands the same week as 52 #50. Like I said, it's a fast war but incredibly far reaching. The four parts, written by **Keith Champagne** (JSA) and **John Ostrander** (SUICIDE SQUAD) and drawn by **Pat Olliffe, Andy Smith, Tom Derenick** and **Jack Jadson**, feature, well, just about everyone.

So join us as we uncover the secrets behind the transformation of Firestorm, Martian Manhunter and Aquaman and reveal the tragedies of Batgirl and the Teen Titans. And now that I think of it, just how did Jason Todd become Nightwing?

Here's your chance to find out. If you were excited by One Year Later, captivated by 52 and a fan of the DC Universe, April 18th is the week of comics you can't miss.

Oh, one last thing: If you are wondering whatever happened after Dick proposed to Barbara Gordon, give a look to NIGHTWING ANNUAL #2, also on sale in April. You won't be disappointed.

To be continued.

Dan DiDio

DC NATION

For a complete list of this week's titles, sneak peeks, breaking news and more, visit us at dccomics.com

BATMAN & THE MAD MONK

The Mad Monk defeated? At least for now. Check out more Batman thrills coming at you from DC!

THE HOT LIST THIS WEEK

BLUE BEETLE #11

HAWKGIRL #60

ACTION COMICS ANNUAL #10

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ONE MAGIC WORD...

AND A BOY BECOMES THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MORTAL!

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Written and Illustrated by **JEFF SMITH** Award-winning author of **BONE**

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